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AUTHOR Horton, Thelma White
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ABSTRACT

This position paper on teaching children to read explains with several examples exactly what "quagmires" are and how they hamper children as they learn the elements of reading basics. The paper takes a multidisciplinary approach to attacking stumbling blocks to learning most often experienced by child learners. To explain the concept of quagmire, the paper gives as an example the tying of a shoe lace--a problem that offers immense difficulty at the onset, one which must be solved, and one, which if conquered, offers immense gratification and value. The paper states that the quagmire of the reading process is not nearly as complicated as the learned process of feeding oneself. According to the paper, reading is a quagmire which differs from feeding oneself in four fundamental ways: reading is subject to mandatory disciplined behavior even at home; reading is a victim of free play in tolerance; accomplishment is not always immediate gratification; and "values" are obscured and mingled with the "value" systems of others, i.e., teachers, librarians, etc. The suggestion in the paper is to begin with the knowledge that reading is a survival tool. The paper concludes that here then is the key: Reading and learning go hand in hand--there must be physical separation of home and school but authentic education is the best way to go. It finds that accepting legitimate learning quagmires is how to get there. (NKA)

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Stemming, Jointing, and Eradicating Legitimate Learning Quagmires

by

Thelma White Horton

America's educational system is primarily aimed at producing individuals who can read and write, calculate and think. (Morris & Pal, 1993).

"Stemming, Jointing, and Eradicating Legitimate Learning Quagmires" takes a multidisciplinary approach to attacking stumbling blocks to learning most often experienced by child learners.

Starting out, the point must be made that all people experience great and most times conquerable learning quagmires in childhood. Home or school these quagmire events are a certainty. All quagmires hold a value for the individual confronted with such a problem of immense latitude. (Heilman, 1994, p. 1)

For example the tying of the shoe lace is a quagmire. A problem that offers immense difficulty at the onset, one which must be solved, and one, which if conquered offers immense gratification and value.

One of the greatest and most demanding quagmires, is learning to feed one's self. It is not arguable in any forum that learning to feed one's self is not valuable.

However; feeding presents a rather complex example of a quagmire because the objective is precise to the point of immanent survival.

The methodology for accomplishment of the feeding objective is complex and requires hours of prolonged practice before even a rudiment of effective feeding for purposes of first flavor sensation and then survival are accomplished.

The stem for this particular quagmire is simple, really. The child was not born with an innate ability to feed from foreign containers. Foreign, meaning here, a container of food which does not require the sucking reflex.

A good jointing method to overcome this particular quagmire, the inability to feed ones self, I believe, would be free play. Let the child play with the food as well as the container. There are many verifiable studies which have strenuously investigated many "joints" of learning as well as creativity in the very young. These studies emphasize "free play" as a method of true learning acquisition.

Learning it seems, in children, is positively affected by opportunities for "free play and exploration." (Torrance, 1962a: Andrews and Torrance, 1968)

Playing with all food stuffs which is supplied, gives the child much more information regarding" tactile map knowledge" of the face's, area and perimeter than any caregiver could demonstrate within a given time frame. (org. author ob.)

It would appear that the dilemma of quagmires would be alleviated with the structured input of "free play." Research on a greater scale is necessary to clarify how initial creative skills and learning can be maintained when the demand for disciplined behavior aborts creativity and authentic thinking.

For example, the quagmire of the reading process. Reading is not nearly as complicated as the learned process of feeding ones self. **(Applied Science and Technology Index, Genial Science Index, Science Citation index)**

A dichotomy of the two operations: learned feeding and learned reading is **"focus intent."**

"Focus intent" is observed when there is deliberate (biological) and immediate gratification (cessation of hunger) to be achieved by accomplishing a practiced task As for example, the delight of taste at the end of free play feeding, when the awkward spoon reaches the small mouth with flavorful content The values here could be cessation of hunger or simply the acquisition of taste, old or new.

Reading is a quagmire which differs from feeding ones self in four fundamental ways:

1. Reading is subject to mandatory disciplined behavior even at home.
2. Reading is a victim of free play in tolerance.
3. Accomplishment is not always immediate gratification.
4. "Values" are obscured and mingled with the "value" systems of others. i.e. teachers, librarians, etc.

All readers are not the same, but all people read for the same reasons. (Battle 1993). Most beginning readers, today, do not understand this component of the "why read?" quagmire.

And many teachers do not understand fully why their students "do not read". Some teachers believe that their students "can not read." This is a quagmire with its own joints, stems and perceived legitimacy's. Unfortunately for the students, this is a learned behavioral quagmire and can be passed on.

Unless the children have been nurtured in perceived reading values through a home like setting before formal schooling takes place, reading education is initially doomed to failure Note, "reading education" is doomed to fail not the student reader.

This is most definitely a stemming quagmire for educators. Thus jointing by the educational community must address the "value" component of the quagmire before effective learning can be disseminated appropriately.

"Lack of prior knowledge" is a simplistic approach. Also, within the reading quagmire it is not the first joint component. It is "free play" to be used when concepts are missing caused by a lack of "value" stemming. Not lack of prior knowledge, but the lack of value consciousness.

For example, a young reader of diverse intelligence, (Hart, 1993; Patthey-Chavez & Gergen, 1992; Sue, 1991; Trotter, 1992) would have different ideas of a "magic carpet" than a "normed" student who has been nurtured by the fairy tale of "The Magic Carpet Ride" in a setting which expounds on the value of having such a desirable carpet.

The value must be seen as legitimate. (Baca & Almanza, 1991); Figueroa, 1989) These peculiar maxims are unchanging. At the beginning (stemming), there must be a "value" (jointing) in place to legitimatize the process. Reading unlike self feeding does not have an immediate satisfaction component. Childhood education must, in the case of reading have components available to joint the quagmire.

Here at this beginning juncture is where "free play" could perform its most important roll. Games, talking, pretending with words, all of this play should be allowed, so that the child could develop a tactile (feeling) for the area and perimeters of words and their usage. The "free play" element begins the "concrete" value that is imparted while enjoying a good book. (e.g. Fox 1971, Karnes & Johnson, 1990, Kitano, 1989, Whitmore, 1986)

This joint of the quagmire is most important. Not just reading to learn to read. But reading for enjoyment. There is a value that is hard to give up. Children can read. The quagmire is, where to begin. The suggestion of this paper is to begin with the knowledge that reading is a survival tool. One should be able to read well enough to save ones life or perhaps the life of another.

In closure, we must remember that American Education is based upon tradition. Diversity is a relatively new idea. The first word of this position paper was a word many have never considered in connection with the reading process, even though reading elements have been known for more years than one could count correctly; looking at a "new" element is hard to imagine. But there is an element, more times than not; over looked by educators, parents, and theorist. The new element of "quagmire." The "element" paradigm must be reconstructed or we will lose even more students to illiteracy.

Reading plus quagmire. Quagmire not in the sense of confusion or distortion, but in the sense of difficulty. A major problem. A problem almost insurmountable without aid from some one trained to follow "legitimate" clues. And after finding an answer following that answer to the next logical barrier to reading comprehensively.

Evidence has been cited that quagmires do in deed exist and persist although the puzzles have not been sorted out in quite this way before this paper on the subject. (auth. org. idea)

E.D. Hirsch, Jr., ***Cultural Literacy, What Every American Needs To Know***, 1987 Charlottesville, Virginia is a hero of mine. He calls himself an educational activist. Hirsch wrote many articles for scholarly magazines such as ***The American Scholar*** before hitting the big time with, ***Cultural Literacy***. I use Mr. Hirch's observations during his road trips over Europe. He said that crossing a line in one country would aquatint the listener with another language. Every line crossed would ensure another language.

French children spoke French, Italian children spoke Italian at the crossing of a single line. He said this was no accident. Indeed, governments had placed these lines for just such linguistic purposes. The purpose was to prevent a linguistic quagmire. An insurmountable problem which had existed previously during the Middle Ages when no

lines existed to tell people of different nationalities who they were and where they belonged.

Perhaps we, as people who care about the welfare of children, all children, should heed the lesson that history has left us.

We must first admit that reading and quagmire go together. Quagmire must be our new reading element. Reading can be done by all children. At some level all children can read in some way.

Not merely decoding, but reading for enjoyment. How can one teacher in one classroom teach all background knowledge to even one student efficiently? Not possible. The more realistic approach is to find a solution to the problem of not reading. Where do the barriers lye?

"Give a man a fish, and you have fed him for one day, give a person a lesson in fishing, and they will feed themselves forever." Perhaps the quagmire approach to reading problems is not the traditional way of the past centuries.

The good news is we do not live in the Middle Ages. Things have changed. We are of all colors and nationalities, We speak different languages and come with luggage that is diversified.

Here then is the key: Reading and learning go hand in hand. There must be physical separation of home and school but authentic education is the best way to go. How to get there. Accepting, legitimate learning quagmires. Be willing to risk pursuing the wrong path. You have a license to make mistakes. That's how we all learn new things anyway. Then and only then can we attack the "legitimate learning quagmire" render it dead and gone, not just crippled, and move on to the valuable treasures reading and learning have to offer all children.